GLOVER PARK COMMERCIAL DISTRICT STUDY

Preliminary Inventory and Recommendations Summary

First Community Meeting – July 25th, 2006

OBJECTIVE OF STUDY

The objective of this study is to assess what is working best in the Glover Park Commercial District and to recommend potential ways to build upon the current success as a neighborhood retail area. Improvements to the built environment such as building facades, parking, and area's streetscape could increase the vibrancy of the commercial district and better serve the needs of the Glover Park Commercial District and the residents.

STUDY AREA BOUNDARIES

The study area is comprised of the Glover Park Commercial District along Wisconsin Avenue from Whitehaven Parkway to Calvert Street.

NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT

The Glover Park Commercial District is surrounded by stable, well established neighborhoods including Glover Park, Massachusetts Avenue Heights, and Tunlaw. The residential areas are characterized by low density residential neighborhoods with a few higher density apartment and condominium buildings located on Wisconsin Avenue and in Cathedral Heights. The neighborhoods consist of a mix of older residents who have lived there for decades, families with young children, single professionals and students living in "group houses."

RETAIL DEMAND ASSESSMENT

Based on surveys conducted in May 2006, an estimated 175,000 to 190,000 square feet of retail space is located within the Glover Park Commercial District.

The current retail vacancy rate is an estimated 2.4 percent.

Approximately 54% of Glover Park's retail space is occupied by Neighborhood Goods & Services tenants. This category includes establishments such as grocery stores, drugstores, dry cleaners, spas/salons, health clubs, hardware stores and similar.

Food & Beverage Establishments comprise 29% of Glover Park's retail inventory. This category includes sit-down restaurants, cafes, coffee shops, ice cream stores and similar.

The smallest percentage of retail tenants in Glover Park (17%) are categorized as General Merchandise, Apparel, Furnishings and Other. Examples of this retail type include bookstores, electronics stores, home décor and furniture stores, and similar.

This distribution of retail by type is typical for a neighborhood retail district.

Glover Park faces direct retail competition from Georgetown, Cathedral Heights, Cleveland Park/Woodley Park, and Tenleytown. These nearby retail districts compete with Glover Park for local spending from households and office workers.

Glover Park's primary customer trade area encompasses the residents and offices within the immediate neighborhood (approximately Massachusetts Avenue to Archibald Glover Park and Cathedral Avenue to Q Street). This is the area from which the majority of Glover Park's retail sales will be derived. According to 2006 estimates based on 2000 Census information, 13,674 people reside in 7,903 households within the primary trade area's boundaries. The median household income is \$74,367. Approximately 38.7% percent of households report incomes of more than \$100,000.

Glover Park's secondary customer trade area extends from Connecticut Avenue to MacArthur Boulevard and from Van Ness Street to M Street. This area provides reliable and consistent sales for Glover Park's restaurants and specialty stores/services, albeit to a lesser degree than the primary trade area. According to 2006 estimates based on 2000 Census information, 36,925 people reside in 17,768 households within the secondary trade area's boundaries. The median household income is \$91,230.

The possibilities for forming an association of retail tenants located within the Glover Park Commercial District will be evaluated in a separate document. A variety of options will be investigated and measured against the needs of Glover Park's retail community. A merchants' association is an appropriate organizing mechanism to distribute information between retailers and the community at large. A retail management district would perform the same functions as a merchants' association, but could also provide a funding infrastructure for small projects. A business improvement district (BID) would create a formal management system for Glover Park with the ability to execute projects and retain employees derived from assessments collected within the commercial district.

The success of this commercial district can be measured by the difference between supply and demand for Glover Park retail. This assessment concludes that supply (existing retail inventory) and demand (estimated captured expenditures) are approximately equal. These calculations suggest that the retail market has developed the Glover Park Commercial District in appropriate proportion to the needs of the surrounding resident and office population. While additional demand remains to be captured in the Food & Beverage and General Merchandise (GAFO) categories, no significant retail demand is unmet.

URBAN DESIGN, PUBLIC REALM AND PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The Glover Park Commercial District has many positive attributes that distinguish it from other commercial districts in the City. Glover Park is a distinct, neighborhood-serving commercial district that is quite different from Georgetown to the south, which is a regional destination

area. The major commercial areas to the north of Glover Park, such as Tenleytown and Friendship Heights also have more regional and community level retailers as well as Metro rail access, which draw shoppers from a much larger area.

Overall, the Glover Park community is fortunate to have a good mix of neighborhood serving retailers (e.g., grocery stores, hardware store) and service providers (e.g., dry cleaners, gas stations). On the other hand, existing quality of the streetscape and the public realm requires some improvements to provide safer and more pleasant and inviting commercial environment for the pedestrians. "Cobra-head" street lights with grey large pole bases, inappropriately narrow areas of sidewalks, inconsistent and poorly maintained street tree box treatments, news stands that are randomly located and chained to parking meters, parked bikes locked to parking meters and utility poles, and lack of desired public space/gathering places are some of the issues to be addressed and discussed for potential improvements in this study.

Commercial District: The Glover Park Commercial District can be described as three different segments; Southern Segment, Middle Segment and Northern Segment.

Southern Segment

The southern segment of Glover Park from Whitehaven up to W street has very narrow sidewalks on both sides with a limited number of street trees. The east side of Wisconsin Avenue at this end has almost no street trees planted for over 500 feet due to the underground utility vaults, which run under the sidewalk.

There are several poorly maintained buildings and buildings under construction along the west side that distract from the attractiveness of the environment as pedestrians access Glover Park from the south.

This is also the segment of Wisconsin Avenue where brick pavement of the sidewalks in Georgetown at the intersection of Whitehaven Street. Most of the concrete pavement of the sidewalk along Wisconsin Avenue in Glover Park is in a fair condition.

Middle Segment

The area between W Street and the southern side of Guy Mason Park is the core of the Glover Park Commercial District. Large anchor retailers such as CVS and Whole Foods intermix with a variety of restaurants, bars, smaller retails and offices. This middle segment of the corridor appears to be visited by both the local residents and others who drive to the area from neighborhoods such as Georgetown and Dupont Circle.

Northern Segment

The northern segment of the corridor has two distinctly different sides. The east side is primarily fronted by the Guy Mason softball field and surrounding grounds of the Guy Mason Recreation Center. The west side is lined with small retailers, bars and restaurants. This northern end of the commercial district is anchored by a gas station on the west and International Union of Operating Engineers building on the east side at the intersection of Calvert and Wisconsin.. At the northeast corner of the Calvert Street and Wisconsin Avenue

intersection is a recently constructed and occupied condominium known as Georgetown Heights. The high-end price points of these units suggest the strength of the residential market as well as the desirability of Glover Park area.

PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS

General Recommendation (Area-wide)

- Replace old "cobra head" street lights with more pedestrian-friendly ornamental light
 fixtures with hanging flower baskets and banners. Banner designs could reflect the
 history and culture of the Glover Park community and the commercial district. These
 elements are an important part of the public realm and they provide an identity
 throughout the corridor, promote a uniformed appearance, and bring the community
 together visually.
- Provide mid-block pedestrian access routes from adjacent residential neighborhood to Wisconsin Avenue through existing open spaces, parking lots, alleyways and public utility easement.
- Relocate news stands, bike racks and other sidewalk obstructions to other convenient locations to reduce clutter and promote safer and easier pedestrian movement.
- Introduce master parking meter system to further reduce clutter.
- Introduce uniform street tree plantings/boxes. Trees, groundcovers, ornamental fence, etc. Consider creating bump-outs to increase street tree planting.
- Provide more visible directional signs for off-street parking lots.
- Initiate OP/DDOT discussions to explore the potential widening of sidewalks for improved street tree planting, a safer sidewalk environment and shorter street crossings.
- Educate business operators on DC regulations requiring businesses to maintain the retail façade and public space (including tree boxes) in front of their establishments.

Southern Segment

- Clean up of construction sites and poorly maintained buildings
- Coordinate with DDOT on the possibility of widening the sidewalks south of W Street.
- Create a community "Gateway" using signage or sculpture element at the small open space located on the corner of 35th Street.

Middle Segment

- Improve key intersections at W Street, Hall Place and Whole Foods garage entrance. Provide bump-outs and increase street tree planting. As a result, provide safer and shorter street crossing, create an improved /enhanced sense of place and pedestrian-friendly intersections.
- Redevelop the raised open space (across from CVS) into a community focal point and create a gathering space. Provide better accessibility and visibility from the street by re-configuring the retaining walls along the sidewalk and creating more open access points to the plaza above. Possibly build a water feature as a focal point in this space which would also muffle the sound of the traffic. Provide an attractive and cool

environment to gather around and suggest outdoor cafés to draw more users to this open space at this location.

Northern Segment

- Create a "Gateway" feature at the intersection of Calvert Street using the relatively wide sidewalk area in front of International Union building.
- Initiate discussion with Chevron gas station proprietors to consider changes to the gas station circulation to promote pedestrian safety at the intersection of Calvert Street possibly eliminate one to two existing curb cuts.
- Consider a new use for the International Union building at the intersection of Calvert Street for anchor retail.
- Replace the existing park fence along Guy Mason Park with a lower and more durable ornamental fence and provide seatwall or benches to create pedestrian friendly spaces and promote interaction between park and street activities.

PARKING OBSERVATIONS AND STRATEGIES

Observations were made of existing parking conditions within the Glover Park Commercial District, and then a series of strategies was developed to allow better use of Glover Park's parking resources. The limits of the study area were Wisconsin Avenue between Whitehaven Parkway and Calvert Street. The study area included on-street parking on Wisconsin Avenue and off-street parking accessed directly from Wisconsin Avenue or very close to Wisconsin Avenue.

Observations

Much of the off-street parking is free (for retail patrons) or relatively inexpensive. There are approximately 780 spaces in off-street surface lots and garages within the study area. Of these, approximately 425 spaces are reserved for patrons of specific business establishments. These spaces constitute underutilized parking resources during evening hours. The remaining off-street spaces are available to the public starting at \$3.00 for the first hour up to \$8.00 a day. Two surface lots have evening parking at a \$3.00 flat rate.

Off-street parking is in general poorly marked, either with illegibly small signs or no signing at all. Examples are shown here. The perception of lack of parking is driven in part by poor visibility of existing parking resources. Pedestrian access between off-street parking areas and Wisconsin Avenue is via narrow alleyways shared with vehicles. Pedestrians may feel uncomfortable or unsafe sharing alleys with vehicles.







There are approximately 89 legal parking spaces on Wisconsin Avenue within the study area. Of these, 83 are metered spaces (some with a one-hour maximum and some with a two-hour maximum) and 6 are residential parking permit spaces. The general public can use the RPP spaces for free for up to 2 hours, while metered parking costs \$0.50 per hour. The remaining curbside space is reserved for embassy parking (approximately 4 spaces), commercial loading zones, and bus stops. Bus stops are closely spaced within the study area, nearly one stop every block. The length of the study area is 2400 feet, and there are 4 southbound bus stops and 3 northbound bus stops.

As seen in other areas of the city, parking regulation signs in Glover Park are frequent, seemingly contradictory, and potentially confusing. An example is shown here.

Street sweeping on Wisconsin Avenue is currently scheduled for Wednesday on the west side and Thursday for the east side, reported to be peak business days.

On-street parking is well utilized between 35th Street and Calvert Street. South of 35th Street, on-street parking vacancy was observed.



Strategies

There is a desire to retain and enhance existing parking areas in order to minimize spillover of commercial parking into neighboring residential areas. The following strategies were crafted to allow better use of existing parking resources, both off-street and on-street. These strategies are intended to spark discussion between the Office of Planning and local residential and business stakeholders. It is anticipated these strategies would be refined at the conclusion of this study. The strategies are limited in scope to the study area: Wisconsin Avenue between Whitehaven Parkway and Calvert Street and the parking lots immediately accessed from Wisconsin Avenue.

Strategy 1: Maximize off-street parking

As described above, the off-street parking inventory has identified approximately 780 spaces in parking lots and garages within the study area. Because of the high value of land, constructing

additional parking may be financially infeasible. Therefore, the use of existing parking resources should be maximized.

- To address visibility of existing parking opportunities, improve signing to better indicate the location of off-street parking.
 - o Larger signs, visible from both travel directions on Wisconsin Avenue.
 - o Consistent image, preferably using internationally recognizable symbols such as a large "P" and arrows.
- To make use of underutilized parking spaces, work with owners of private lots in single use to open those lots to the public.
 - o Examples are:
 - CVS
 - Whole Foods
 - Pearson's
 - **2150-2176 Wisconsin**
 - o These lots are typically underutilized in the evening
 - o These lots hold approximately 285 spaces all together.
 - o Need to address liability and insurance issues.
- Improve pedestrian connectivity between off-street lots and Wisconsin Avenue.
 - o Pavement marking: striping out part of the alley as a pedestrian zone.
 - o Sidewalks / walkways: construct a raised sidewalk.
 - o Illumination: ensure adequate lighting for nighttime use.

Strategy 2: Maximize on-street parking

The on-street parking inventory has identified approximately 89 spaces available to the public within the study area, including metered and residential parking permit spaces. On-street parking is valuable and frequently fully occupied within the core of the commercial district. (Parking south of 35th Street was underutilized during the day of observations.)

- Introduce pay-and-display master parking meters.
 - o Individual meters are spaced to accommodate the largest vehicle reasonably expected to park. Parking spaces are about 25 feet long.
 - With master meters, cars can park closer together on average, creating a few additional parking spaces, perhaps as many as 20 spaces within the study area.



- Eliminate residential parking permit spaces on Wisconsin Avenue within the study area and convert them to metered parking. This could produce 6 additional parking spaces.
- Price on-street parking to encourage turnover and drive long-term parkers to off-street lots.

- On-street spaces are the most valuable and should be priced accordingly. For example, parking in one off-street lot in Glover Park costs \$3.00 for one hour and \$4.50 for two hours. You may wish to price on-street parking for less than one hour lower than \$3.00, but on-street parking for two hours should cost more than \$4.50 to encourage longer-term parkers to park off-street. Pricing can be used as a different means of encouraging turnover, rather than setting maximum allowable parking times at meters.
- Metered parking should be in effect throughout the period of peak parking demand. This period may be in the evenings or on weekends when typically meters are not in effect. Metering throughout peak periods will continue to encourage turnover. Some changes to on-street parking regulations outside the study area may be needed to manage spillover parking. Preferably the underutilized off-street parking lots can be made available to help contain parking impacts.
- Net increases in parking revenue (over current collections) should be directed toward the cost of meter replacement and should be used to help fund streetscape improvements.
- Simplify parking regulations and pare down signing to the extent possible.
 - o Signing should quickly and clearly communicate where parking is permitted to make on-street spaces easier to identify.
- Reduce the number of bus stops within the study area.
 - o Currently all buses stop every block. Investigate the impacts of consolidating bus stops to every other block.
 - o Each eliminated bus stop could produce 4 parking spaces.
- Work with embassy properties to identify true on-street parking needs and minimize public space allocated to single-use parking. This could produce up to 4 additional spaces.

Strategy 3: Integrate parking with urban design

Parking should be made integral with the urban design of Wisconsin Avenue through the Glover Park commercial district. The following actions are also applicable to Strategies 1 and 2.

- Introduce pay-and-display master parking meters to reduce sidewalk clutter.
- Parking graphics should be consistent and visible.
- Investigate realigning parking lanes to allow sidewalk widening.
 - o The northernmost 300 feet of Wisconsin Avenue in the study area has very narrow sidewalks, and the roadway is striped for six lanes. Coordinate with DDOT and DPW to determine if the outside lanes can be removed so that the sidewalk can be widened by as much as 10 feet.

O The 200 feet of Wisconsin Avenue north of 35th Street has narrow sidewalks as well. Coordinate with DDOT and DPW to determine if the roadway can be narrowed to still allow four travel lanes for peak periods while widening the sidewalk. For example, if the current roadway is 48 feet wide, it may be possible to narrow it to 40 feet and use the remaining 8 feet to widen the sidewalks.



• Pedestrian access to parking lots should be made safer.